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ABSTRACT

Reviewed are the history and public relations, financial and service roles of lay "Friends of the Library" groups. Programs and techniques useful in the pursuit of these roles are suggested. Guidelines for a constitution, fee schedule, and administrative structure plus a bibliography give potential friends organizations help in establishing themselves as useful adjuncts to their community library. (KB)

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FRIENDS' ORGANIZATIONS:

THE SUPPORTIVE ELEMENT ESSENTIAL TO LIBRARIES

A Paper

Presented to

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FRIENDS' ORGANIZATIONS: THE SUPPORTIVE ELEMENT ESSTENIAL TO LIBRARIES

DEVELOPMENT

Libraries have always had "friends." Without the support of these early "friends" who helped establish collections of literature and supported libraries, libraries would not have advanced to the scientific stage enjoyed today. Two examples of early libraries were the Library Company of Philadelphia, formed in 1794. Other library organizations formed and were instrumental in developing public libraries.

In the United States, the first library group to be called "Friends of the Library" was established in Glen Ellyn, Illinois in 1922.[1] In the same year a Friends' organization was formed in Syracuse, New York. Since 1930, Friends' organization have increased rapidly. By 1959 there were 400 groups. By 1973 the Friends numbered 1,000 groups with a total of over 100,000 members. In Texas, among the first organizations were East Texas State Teachers College of Commerce, 1936, Corpus Christi, 1938, and Galveston, 1940. In 1940 the Friends of Texas Libraries appeared. Friends' organizations are increasing in numbers to support municipal, county, school, college, university, industrial, hospital and private libraries.

UNIQUE COMPONENTS

Institutions, like people, need friends. The people who use the libra , are friends, the staff whose loyality and expertise that make a library a success are friends and the library commissioners are friends. But the library needs one more group of friends. These friends are informed about the library's services and needs and they publicize this information in the community. They represent varied interests and professions. They use their political influence, their generous financial support and their individual and collective

gifts for the library. The membership is representative of the entire community. Friends "are the intermediary, the two-way link between the public and the library."[2] There should be good will between the library board and the Friends. Each has its own particular job to do, and yet they may complement and supplement each other.

Friends are "amateurs" in library service. As such, they can motivate libraries to greater endeavors, strike out in new paths, and increase the potentialities of programs--unorthodox possibilities for action.[3] However, Friends should not undertake projects or campaigns directly affecting the library unless these are regarded as beneficial by the staff or library board.[4] One important "musts" is a liaison staff member from the library, who, while, not able to vote in the Friends' decisions, is available to give guidance, assistance and continuity. Continuity is essential for smoothness of operation from year to year because of the continual changes of board members.

PURPOSES

Friends are remarkably adaptable to the individual needs of communities. Each community has special needs. Friends are good will groups providing and promoting understanding of the needs and services of libraries. Among the many purposes for establishing Friends' groups are:

* To stimulate public support
* To interpret the library's needs to local governing bodies
* To give information about the library to the public
* To sponsor programs for the community
* To promote the welfare of the library
* "To encourage betterment of the library's physical facilities"[5]
* To encourage use of the library to its fullest extent
* "To interpret to the public its potentialities and to seek the support necessary to realize them"[6]

* To coordinate efforts of interest groups
* To increase financial support
* To achieve greater status for the librarian
* To enrich cultural life of the community
* To meet emergencies of the library
* To be ambassadors of good will
* "To foster and stimulate interest in the community in the needs and services of the library"[7]
* "To enrich the cultural and social life of the community"[8]
* To create imaginative programs of assistance
* To focus public attention on the library
* To stimulate the use of the library's resources and services
* To receive and encourage gifts, endowments and bequests for the library
* To support and cooperate with the library to encourage library services and facilities to the community
* To lend legislative support for libraries when needed
* To maintain a non-profit organization
* To support the freedom to read as expressed in the American Library Association bill of Rights

PUBLIC RELATIONS

The Friends, along with the staff and the library board, have a goal of providing better library service. They wish to make the community feel that this is truly "their" library, they have contributed to it, and they are using it. Tremendous good will for library service is present, but it takes leadership from an interested Friends' group to marshall and use it.

Friends keep the public informed and attention focused on library needs.

Friends are one of the best public relations tools. As Friends encourage enlistment of other Friends, their influence becomes apparent in the good will created for the library in the community. The public must be convinced that the library is a vital and integral portion of the community's total educational resources. The Friends create an atmosphere of community understanding of the functions and potentials of good library service. Friends understand the need to help citizens develop an interest in the library. A Friends' organization, "unless it degenerates into a tea and cookie society, can be another means of establishing communication with the public."[9]

"A public institution should expect to budget plenty of time and money for telling its story to the public."[10] It should have a public relations program which tells its story at every opportunity and by many methods. A library program should be geared to reach those who never enter the library--this is what makes friends for the library. Among other things, the library's public relations story should include:

* Obtaining cooperation of all community organizations in general planning and specific projects
* Interpreting the library to the community
* Working for integration of community cultural and educational awareness
* Writing personal letters and visiting legislators to use persuasion to get needed library laws passed
* Securing adequate budget funds or guaranteeing that bonds are voted for new buildings or other necessary capital improvements.
* Dedication to promoting wider use and better service and facilities

FINANCIAL ROLE

Successful financial campaigns require careful planning, determination, purpose, and

hard work. The financial help of the Friends is most important. The majority of libraries are woefully lacking in funds. The Friends' organization is not a policy-making group but a working group that seeks public support for the library. The Friends raise and handle funds for the library. Money given through the Friends, including membership fees, is tax deductible. Memorial gifts to the library are also deductible. Acknowledgment cards are always sent to the memorial donor and to the family of the one remembered.

SERVICES

Needs are many, and the possibilities of services that the Friends' organization can provide are endless. Friends are an important source of strength and inspiration in providing library services for the community. They create community enthusiasm for books, for reading and for library development programs. Examples of a few services are: "books for shut-ins: hospitals; story hours; rental shelf; book drives; clerical work; picture files; interviews with pioneers; survey of users; history of library; and newspaper index."[11] Sometimes they deal with the problems of legislation. In communities where there are no libraries, building up interest in a library is of major importance. But for people who like community action causes, there is nothing like a Friend.

RELATIONSHIP TO LIBRARY STAFF

The success of the Friends will depend on the relationship between the Friends and the library. The Friends should have:

* Mutual understanding
* Recognition of needs
* Understanding of problems and objectives
* Knowledge of purposes
* Cooperation between library commission and Friends
* Awareness of limitations

* Dedication of interests

* Endorsement of library policies

* Independence

* Freedom of action

* Ability to supplement the work of the library staff, not to increase it

The library staff should have:

* Ability to aid Friends

* Desire to cooperate

* Guidance in operation

* Available expertise for programs

* Provision of approval of programs

* Good communication

* Consultation on ideas

* Respect

The Friends' organization is an excellent training ground for new library commissioners. The Friends must be treated with respect by the library professionals. Friends are people, not just things, or "rubber stamp" advisory groups.[12] For example, the librarian or a staff member should sit in on every Friends' meeting and never be too busy to confer or consult. The librarian should suggest, advise, and assist, but never undertake, administer, or execute. All communication should go through the library to simplify the work of the ever-busy Friends. Friends should be provided with one official address and the library kept in the center of activities.

The fact that Friends help in telling the library what is wrong is invaluable. They can point out failures and in a friendly manner give the often missed patron's point of view. When

Friends get a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the library they go out as good will ambassadors for the library.[13] The entire library staff should do the best job it can to show that the library is worthy of the Friends' attention.

The library staff should have the finesse to guide but never direct the association. And, most important of all is the sincere expression of gratitude shown by the library to the Friends.[14]

BRANCH LIBRARIES

Some Friends' groups are organized for the immediate neighborhood library. These are usually more informal than the group representing the entire community. These branch libraries should have the blessing of the parent group. The chairman of each branch Friends' group should be represented in the board meetings of the parent group as "ex-officio members."

Many branch libraries stress special interests, such as subject fields of history or music. Sometimes they stress ethnic awareness of the particular neighborhood, while others reflect activities and handicrafts. Special effort must be made to avoid neighborhood nearsightedness and exclusiveness which can lead to political turmoil. The policies and goals of the entire library system must always be kept in mind.

PROGRAMS

Sponsorship of special library programs is one of the most popular functions of Friends. Friends act with enthusiasm for programs and projects when they understand the reasoning and the necessity. Some of the programs are:

* Book discussion groups
* Films
* Book fairs
* Record concerts
* Play-reading

* Talks by authors, regional and national
* Book reviews
* Book sandwich programs
* Lectures
* Speakers

Other special programs are:

* A night to honor authors who have had books published during the year
* Dinner to honor the library staff
* An informal picnic for the news media to say "thanks" for the year round coverage of library activities

The programs are open to the public.

DRIVES

The most universal drive is the Membership Drive. This drive usually held once a year. In many communities it is held in conjunction with National Library Week when the emphasis is on libraries and the impetus is present. A good technique for membership drives must be developed. "Compilation of a sensible mailing list"[15] is a must. Brochures explaining the library membership drive and its purposes are most effective. This is an excellent time for publicity. Good publicity tools are fliers, bookmarks, contests, membership teas, newsletters, billboards, and window displays.

The increase in the Friends' treasury is always gratifying. New members are most welcome. One of the most important and sincerely appreciated aspect of a drive is the good will created, the interest of organizations and clubs, and the expressions of faith in the library voiced by individuals.[16] During these drives the public becomes more conscious of the needs and lacks of the library as well as its growth and benefits.

SALES

Of the many kinds of sales, the most popular and the most fun is the annual "old book sale." It is most always a successful fund-raising venture. From the experience of many libraries, it is one of the most "looked-forward-to" functions of the year. Publicity is easy to obtain and the news media is usually quite cooperative as the imagination can"go wild" with releases. Methods of collecting the books vary. Some libraries have a corner or room for year-round collection. Old clothes and muscles are a necessity for sorting and displaying heavy, often musty, dusty books. Many libraries are able to sell withdrawn books, but some can only sell gift books. Ordinarily, every kind of book is acceptable as a gift for the sale. In periodicals, however, only quality magazines, such as National Geographic, will sell.

The sale will attract crowds looking for that one collector's gem. Books are usually in no particular order and purchasers are quite happy with the "rummage sale" atmosphere. The price of the books are reduced each day of the sale. Prices vary, but some popular price choices are 50¢ the first day, and cut 10¢ each day until the last day when everything sells for a dime. Towards the end of the last day prices are cut to "an entire table for $1.00" and so on until there are none left. If there is space available for storage for the leftovers, books may be kept. However, the remainders are usually not acceptable for much other than to be sold for paper.

By-products of the sale are sometimes more important than the monies gained. Publicity and the good books that are culled for addition to the library's collection are wholesome by-products. But one of the best rewards is the look of pleasure and satisfaction on the face of the purchaser in finding a good buy, or acquiring a collection not otherwise available in his price range.

PUBLICITY

The Friends can tell the library story by using tested publicity techniques. The Friends can "broadcast the needs much more effectively because they are not speaking of themselves or for themselves,"[17] The library can describe needs, desires, programs and the Friends can interpret these to the public in layman's terms and in an objective manner. Frequently there are professional publicity men and women in the Friends who can write copy, arrange programs, plan news releases and do a public relations job for the library at no expense.[18]

In meetings, newsletters, and press releases the library story is told to the public. The problems are identified, the needs stressed, and people are motivated to what they should want in their libraries. This should be a good selling job, because in a seller's market the tactics must be carefully organized, the strengths aligned, and the aims popularized. Thus more and more people become aware of the library and its potentials. Publicity includes:

* Articles, pictures, advertisements, newspaper and bus
* Radio
* Television
* Brochures
* Audio-visual materials
* Dinner meetings with speakers
* Slide presentations
* Personal letters
* Direct Mail advertising and promotion
* Window displays
* Billboards
* Postmark on main
* Marquees

National Library Week brings out the publicity talents of the Friends. Proper publicity can motivate public opinion -- that strange force than can move mountains.

PUBLICATIONS

Friends sometimes venture a publication of their own. Although public libraries seem to do little publication, some do reproduce significant facsimile or publish local works. Book lists, programs, fliers for distribution, and newsletters for the organizations are popular in public libraries. Many university libraries publish excellent journals such as, Columbia Library Columns, Columbia University, The Carrell, University of Miami, and Ex Libris, Texas Technological College.

INTERNAL PROBLEMS

Even in the most harmonious relationships problems exist. Friends and the library are no exception. A few areas where tension is always a potential are listed below:

* Misunderstanding of role
* Mistrust of library staff
* Laymen not realizing overall goals of library
* Library commission's role not clear
* Appreciation lacking toward staff
* Lack of courtesy
* Overstep areas of activity
* Just spending time and energy on teas
* Acting without the full approval of the library commission and librarian
* "Friends feel that because they have done 'so much' for the library, they should have a little more say in how the library is being run
* If we've done the work, why can't we have more say so in the policies of the library

* Have terminal goal or when original purpose, such as new building built, new books purchased, the Friends having done what they set out to do, have no more reason to stay in business, and subsequently fold up

* People with great potential drift away and those who always take and never give of themselves

* "Undertaking projects not regarded as beneficial to the library"[19]

* People "whose relationship to a library may be intimate are not friends if they fall down on the mutual benevolence side and constantly take but never give"[20]

* Holding incorrect or contradictory ideas about the library or are actually resentful about its seeming remoteness

EXTERNAL PROBLEMS

Sometimes problems exist in the relationships of the Friends and the community. Some of these are listed below:

* Limited population

* Community has more pressing needs of the tax dollar and can only supply minimum support of library services.

* Overstepping boundary into realm of policy-making of city officials

* Conflicts of interest and personalities

* Inability to mobilize sufficient community support

* Drain on time and energy of civic leaders

* Friends just reflecting criticism of public

* Tradition that narrows vision to keep alive group ties that are no longer mutually helpful, programs that have lost their point, and collections that have lost their effectiveness

* Failure "to cultivate a mutually beneficial friendship with the local officialdom and those people behind the scenes who can make things happen

* People who are uninterested not only in libraries but question the justice of levying a tax to support an institution which is meaningless to them

* Suspicion that the public library is organized and maintained as a vested interested by highbrows and snobs

* The idea that books and libraries are not for them and are, indeed, downright harmful"[21]

* Financial dependence on the public at large when only a fraction of that public makes use of the library

* The voter who approaches library issues more as a tax payer than a library user

* Not improving standing in the community but making it clear that outside opinions are welcome

* Keeping the library in touch with the real life of the community

* Did not acquire blessing of city officials

CONSTITUTIONS AND BYLAWS

Friends are wise to ask for sample constitutions and bylaws from other groups before forming and formalizing. Friends are generous in sharing samples of their own experiences. After three or four rewrites a workable constitution usually evolves. Next, Friends usually ask an attorney to initiate incorporation precedures. After receiving papers of incorporation, the organization is eligible to apply for tax exemption status. Incorporating protects individual members from debts and liabilities incurred by the organization.[22]

The constitutions and bylaws is the document setting out the general framework of the organization and giving the specific procedures for implementing it. The Constitution usually contains:

* "Name and object of the organization

* General statement of membership qualifications

*Officers and their election

* Meetings

* Method of amending"[23]

The Bylaws usually contain:

* "Detailed rules and procedures by which the intent and purposes of the organization are implemented

* Arrangement by articles dealing with membership, membership meetings, board of directors, directors' meetings, committees, duties of officers, order of business, and means by which the constitution and the bylaws shall be amended"[24]

MEMBERSHIP FEES

It is important to define the yearly membership dues for those joining the organization. Dues are determined by the philosophy and type of the organization.[25] Many public libraries want everyone to have the opportunity to join and have as low a dues structure as feasible. The most universal procedure is to provide for a range of membership fees. These dues begin with a nominal sum but contains categories allowing for more generous sums from those who can better afford them.[26]

Samples of classes of membership dues are:

Public Library

Individual	$ 2.00
Family	5.00
Supporting	10.00
Business Firms, Organizations, and Civic Clubs	25.00
Patron	50.00
Life	100.00

Public Branch Library

Individual	$ 1.00
Family	3.00
Supporting	10.00
Business Firms, Organizations, and Civic Clubs	10.00
Life	25.00

Public Library

Individual	$ 5.00
Contributing	10.00
Sustaining	20.00
Sponsor	50.00
Patron	100.00
Life	1,000.00

University Library

Annual	$ 5.00
Sustaining	25.00
Patron	100.00
Life	1,000.00
Memorial	More than 1,000.00

OFFICERS, BOARD MEMBERS, COMMITTEES

The appointed nominating committee "presents the slate of officers and members of the board of directors in accordance with the bylaws."[27] The voting proceeds "in accordance with parliamentary rules."[28] The officers assume office upon election, and the newly elected officers and members of the board of directors are then recognized. The number of board members and the committees vary with individual libraries.

The usual officers are:

* President
* Vice President
* Recording Secretary
* Corresponding Secretary
* Treasurer

The board members can range from the officers only to as many as 35 members.

The committees consist of Standing Committees and Special Committees. The following examples show the wide range of committees:

* Nominating
* Arrangements
* Invitations
* Membership
* Book Sale
* Projects
* Exhibits
* Publicity
* Program
* Finance
* Public Relations
* Resources
* Bequests
* Donations
* Newsletter
* Legal
* Speakers
* Foundation

* Auditing
* Bulletin
* Liaison
* Promotional

MEETINGS

There are formal meetings (such as business, speakers) and informal meetings (such as social, programs). The Friends' meetings should be open since open meetings promote good public relations. The branch libraries usually meet more frequently. They are more informal since they have a closer relationship to members of the immediate neighborhood. The times for meetings vary from annual, semi-annual, or quarterly to monthly.

SUMMARY

Although Friends' organizations are diversified and unique, each type uniquely contributes to the welfare of the library. They are the right arm of the library. The achievements performed by Friends' organizations are astronomical. One of the most important results is the public's growing interest in the library. Friends' faith in the library, proven by the accomplishments that hard work brings, has given rich returns.

Citizen understanding does not appear suddenly. Only thoughful sacrifice can bring it about. Involvement should cut across all community lines and should be as representative of the community as possible. The Friends' work never ends! The job of building in the public mind a conscious awareness of library services is always there. Not just any library is adequate -- only the very best will do.[29] Friends' organizations -- the supportive element essential to excellent libraries!

PERSONAL NOTE

Of the 104 letters sent to varied types of libraries over the country, there were approximately 40 percent respondents. Of these, it seems that Florida, New York and California either have more active Friends' groups or they are more generous in responses.

A few groups had become inactive with one noting "politics" as the cause.

The following types of materials were received and samples of each were appended in folders attached to the original paper:

* Constitutions and bylaws
* Newsletters that range anywhere from single mimeographed sheets to elaborate phamplets
* Brochures concerning membership dues
* Fliers describing programs
* Beautiful journals from university libraries
* Many personal letters that came as a pleasant surprise

For an extensive guide on booksales contact:

Friends of the Tompkins County Public Library
312 North Cavuga Street
Ithaca, New York 14850

For an excellent kit covering all aspects of Friends' activities contact:

Friends of California Libraries
P.O. Box 455
Sierra Madre, California 91024

NOTES

[1]Sarah Leslie Wallace, Friends of the Library (Chicago: American Library Association, 1962), p. 3.

[2]Helen Ferry, "Friends of Wisconsin Libraries," Wisconsin Library Bulletin 67 (November-December 1971): 402.

[3]James S. Healey, "The Splendid Headache," Library Journal 87 (September 15, 1962): 2993.

[4]Wallace, Friends, p. 18

[5]Lillian C. Van Mater, "Help from Friends of the Library," Wilson Library Bulletin 27 (March 1953): 530.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Healey, Library Journal: 2990.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Guy G. Garrison, "Friends of the Library: Who are They?" Library Journal 87 (September 15, 1962): 2989.

[10]Ibid., p. 2988.

[11]"What are Friends of the Library Groups?" Texas Libraries 22 (November-December 1960): 137

[12]James Igoe, "On Citizen Support of Libraries," American Libraries 74 (June 1974): 281.

[13]Evelyn H. Allen, "Friends of the Library are Public Relations," Wilson Library Bulletin 21 (March 1947): 504.

[14]Helen Scherff Taylor, "Friends of the Library Do Help," Wilson Library Bulletin 28 (January 1954): 425.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ann Hornak, "Friends of the Houston Public Library Christmas Membership Drive," Texas Library Journal 37 (March 1961): 17.

[17]Allen, Wilson Library Bulletin: 504.

[18]Van Mater, Wilson Library Bulletin: 529.

[19]Healey, Library Journal: 2993.

[20]Garrison, Library Journal: 2985.

[21]Ibid., p. 2966-87

[22]"Meredith Willson's Legacy, " American Libraries 2 (February 1971): 209

[23]Wallace, Friends, p. 23

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid., p. 29

[28]Ibid.

[29]"Friends -- the Future," Texas Libraries 18 (September 1956): 141

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